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**Testimony of Charles J. Smyth, Et Al...
Board of Directors - Center for Disability Rights**

RE: Funding - Centers for Independent Living

February 27, 2015

Good Evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Charles Smyth, and I live in Orange. I am the Treasurer of the Center for Disability Rights. I am here with some of my fellow Board members. We are here to oppose the Governor's budget in so far as it eliminates funding for Centers for Independent Living.

I am a person with disabilities who has benefited from the services of the Center for Disability Rights. The services that the Center provided and provides to me enables me to continue to live independently in the community.

Centers are the only non-profits in the State in which the people who receive the services and participate in the activities and programs of the Center are also the people who govern and staff the Center. We are the very model of self-reliance and self-sufficiency that we promote for people with disabilities.

We will never be able to get the costs of our State services and programs for persons who are disabled and elderly under control unless we teach folks to be more self-sufficient and self-reliant. And we would be very hard pressed to do so without the Centers for Independent Living.

The State should be increasing funding for Centers so that we can help the State to get more people to reduce their dependencies on expensive State Medicaid and welfare benefits. When the State puts more resources into the Centers to do the work of deinstitutionalizing people and preventing them from going into nursing homes, the State saves more money. And it is the right thing to do so people can maintain their human dignity.

Thank You for hearing us tonight.

Charles J. Smyth